CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY SERIES

Overview

April 1989

Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a political and military alliance of 16 democratic nations in Western Europe and North America acting collectively to deter and, if necessary, defend against any aggression, in accordance with the terms of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The primary purpose of the Alliance is to defend the NATO area through effective co-ordination of the collective military capabilities of Alliance members. But it also serves the equally important political role as the central Western forum for consulting on developments of common interest, particularly on means of reducing East-West tensions and maintaining international peace and security.

The 16 Allies are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Formation and Evolution of NATO

After the Second World War, it became clear to the democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic that, if another such global conflict were to be avoided, they would have to work together during peacetime as they had during the war. Deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and its former allies, and developments in Eastern Europe, persuaded the free countries of Western Europe and North America that common defensive action was needed.

While several Western leaders had considered the idea of a defensive alliance within the framework of the United Nations, the Europeans were the first to take concrete action. In

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early 1948, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom signed the Brussels Treaty, and pledged to build up a common defence system and to strengthen their economic and cultural ties.

But it was apparent, as Winston Churchill put it, that it was still necessary to bring in the New World to redress the balance of the Old. During the summer of 1948, representatives of the Brussels Treaty signatories and of Canada and the United States began discussions that ultimately led to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty of April 4, 1949. Prior to the signing of the Treaty, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Italy were invited by the negotiating powers to participate as signatories. In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined the 12 original signatory countries and in 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany also acceded to the Treaty.

In 1982, Spain joined the Alliance although, like France, its forces are not part of the Integrated Military Structure of NATO (France withdrew its forces from the Integrated Military Structure in 1966).

With change finally coming to the East, the Allies will face issues that are more complex than anything we have known in the past. At the same time, the potential for success is greater than what we had come to expect. The Alliance is the essential medium through which a more humane, just and secure peace can be achieved in Europe.

— *Manfred Wörner, Secretary General of NATO, Davos, Switzerland, February 1, 1989.*

The Canadian Role in the Birth of NATO

Canada played a key role in the formation of NATO. Two wars had taught Canada that it could not remain detached from developments in Europe and that it was infinitely more costly to fight a war than to act collectively to prevent or deter one.

Convinced that democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic had to work together in peace as they had in wartime, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs (and subsequent Prime Minister), Louis St. Laurent, put foward the idea of a single mutual defence system in the House of Commons in April, 1948. Mr. St. Laurent envisaged a transatlantic alliance that would link its members not only defensively, but also politically, economically, socially and culturally. This concept was pursued vigorously by Canadian representatives at the negotiations which followed that summer with the United States and Europe and helped Canada make an important contribution to shaping the form and nature of the Alliance. The broader Canadian vision of the Alliance was reflected in Article 2 of the Treaty which provides for non-military forms of co-operation.

The North Atlantic Treaty: Its Terms and Goals

The terms of the NATO Treaty set out the goals of the Alliance and the obligations of each member state. In both the preamble and the first article of the North Atlantic Treaty, members emphasize their support for the United Nations and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Subsequent articles of the Treaty dealing with collective defence are also set within the framework of the United Nations Charter, which gives states the right to individual and collective defence.

NATO members are committed to consult each other whenever "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened." Each member retains full status as an independent nation free to decide on the best means of providing mutual support. In Article 5, members have agreed to treat an attack on any one of them as an attack on all. Each member is committed to "take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

NATO's Organization: How it Works

All 16 member states of the Alliance are represented on the North Atlantic Council, the highest consultative forum in the Alliance. Each has an equal voice and all decisions require consensus. The Council meets weekly at the level of ambassadors, and twice yearly at the level of foreign ministers. It may be called into emergency session at any time.

The Defence Planning Committee, established in 1966, and made up of representatives from all members except France, is responsible for questions concerning NATO's collective defence activities. This committee meets regularly at the level of ambassadors, and twice yearly at the level of defence ministers.

Only three members of NATO (the United States, the United Kingdom and France) have nuclear weapons. Of these, the United States and the United Kingdom are integrated into the military structure of NATO. To facilitate involvement by the non-nuclear members of the Alliance in NATO's nuclear affairs, the Nuclear Planning Group was also established in 1966. This group has permitted wider participation in the nuclear decision-making process.

The senior military authority of NATO is the Military Committee, made up of all NATO Members except France and Iceland. It advises both the North Atlantic Council and the Defence Planning Committee on those measures considered necessary for the common defence of the NATO area.

NATO's integrated military forces are divided into three major commands: Europe, the Atlantic and the Channel. Each Supreme Allied Commander is responsible for the planning of the defence of the region for which he is responsible, under the guidance of the Military Committee.

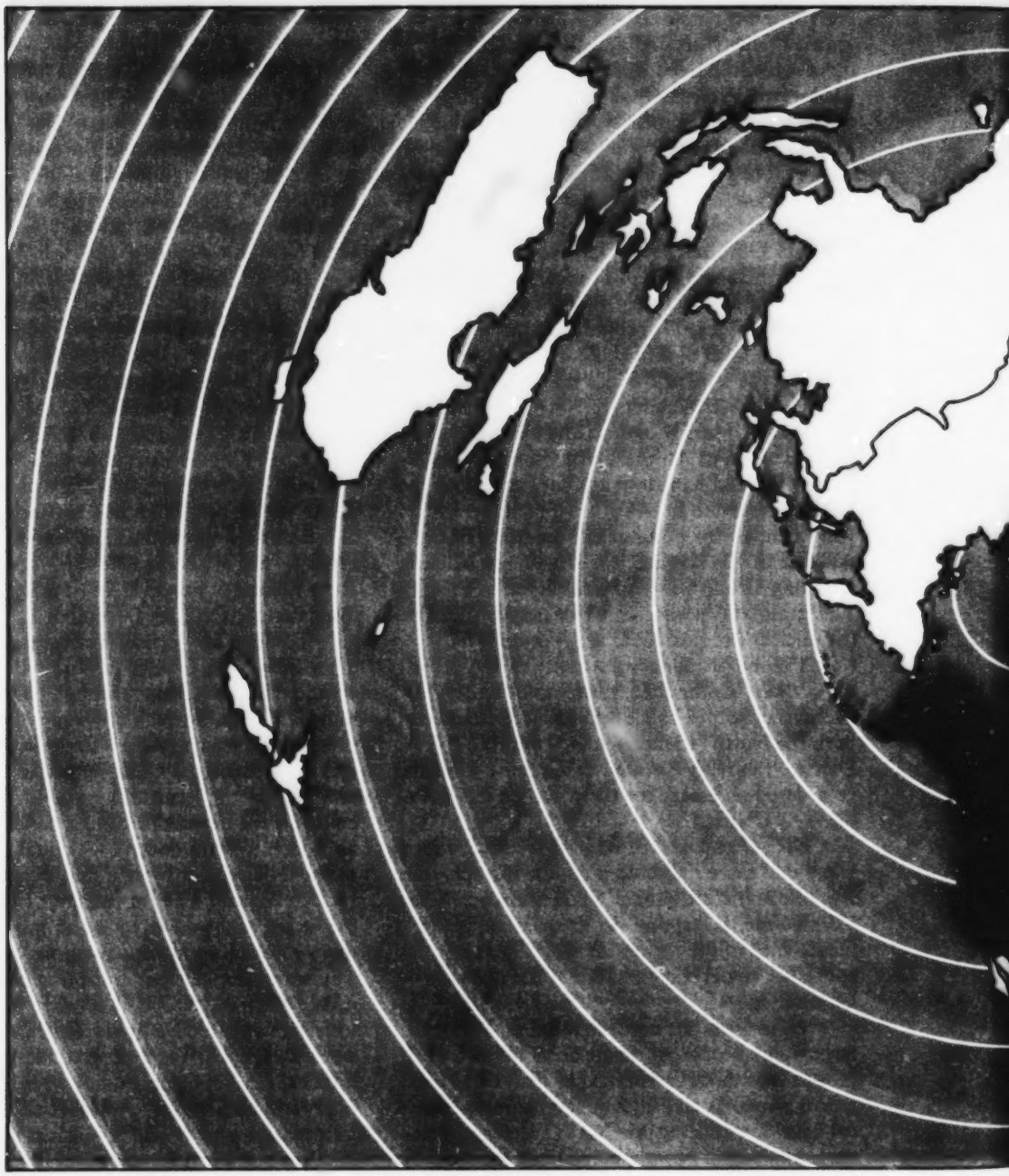
To assist in the co-ordination of work, a large number of subordinate committees and groups have been established to deal with matters as varied as civil emergency planning, political developments outside NATO, defence planning, analysis of economic relations between East and West, armaments co-operation, as well as scientific and environmental co-operation.

NATO's Role in East/West Relations

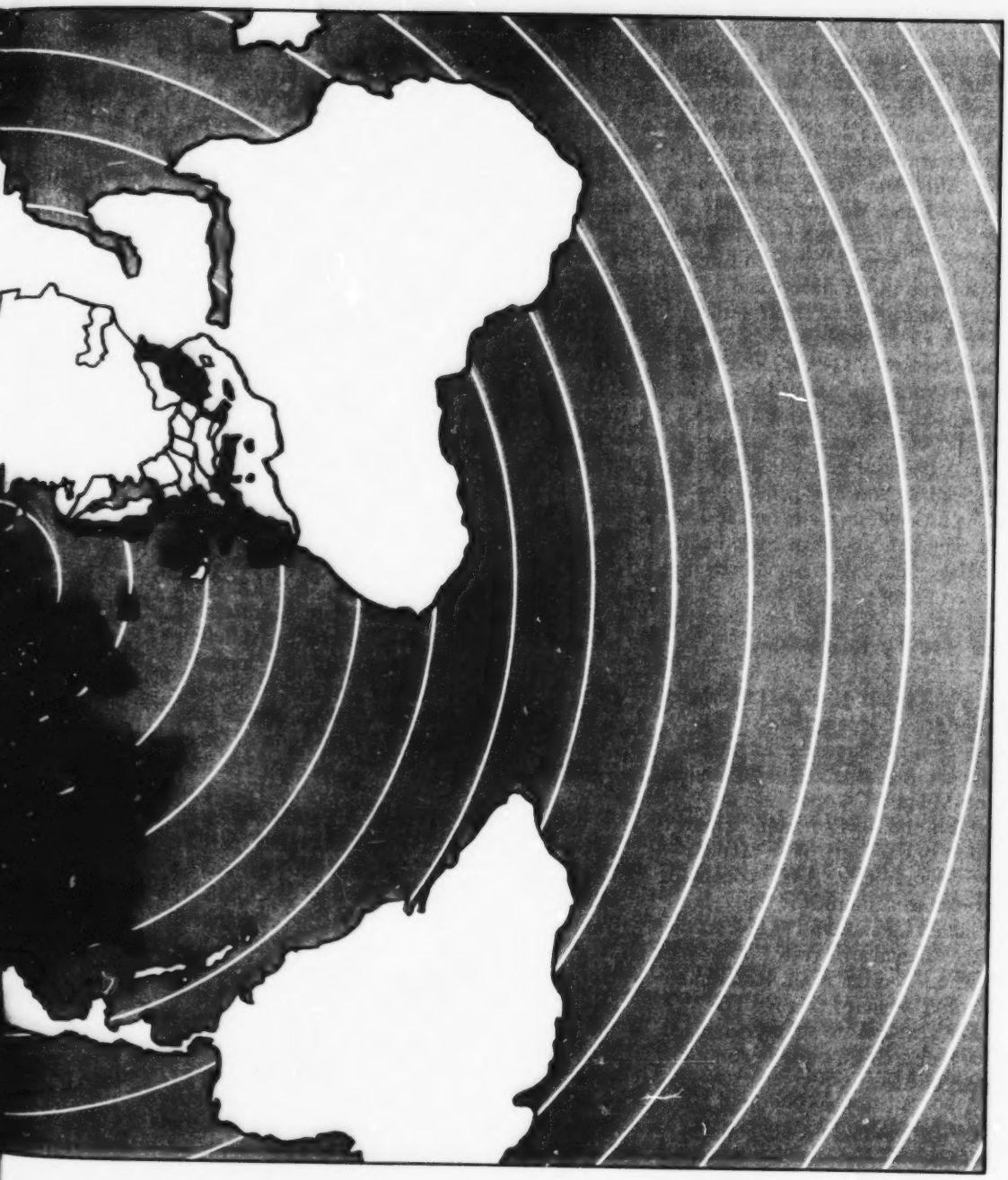
NATO's basic principles, its strength of purpose and solidarity deserve considerable credit for helping to defer conflict in Europe and to resolve East/West differences. Indeed, after four decades, NATO can be said to be the most successful example of collective defence in European history.

In 1967, the Harmel Report on "The Future Tasks of the Alliance," unanimously endorsed by NATO members, concluded that NATO continues to have two main functions: deterrence of conflict and defence against aggression should it occur; and the pursuit of progress towards a more stable East/West relationship. This two-track approach to East/West relations — combining steadfastness and solidarity on the one hand, and an open-minded and positive approach to negotiation on the other — has made possible the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed in Washington, D.C. on December 8, 1987.

To deter and defend against potential aggressors, NATO Allies co-ordinate their defensive arrangements through collective planning. Two topics which are being discussed at present and which relate directly to deterrence and defence are the Comprehensive Concept and nuclear modernization. The former concerns the development of a conceptual approach to arms control which takes account of the requirement to maintain weapons systems for our security while at the same time satisfies the desire of the Allies to see an immediate further reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe. The latter, nuclear modernization of our weapons system in Europe, is considered necessary to ensure an effective policy of deterrence and defence. To promote a better understanding of political developments and of ways of reducing international tensions, the Allies exchange information and views on political trends and developments which may affect the interests of



Geographic Distribution of NATO Member States



the Alliance, so that such information and views can be taken into account by member nations in the formulation of national policies. The Council is the principal forum for such discussions, and while it focusses primarily on political and economic developments in East/West relations, it also examines disarmament and arms control issues, and reviews relevant trends in other areas of the world. The Alliance was instrumental in developing the Western position for the Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, both of which began on March 9, 1989. The former involves 23 NATO and Warsaw Pact member states and is aimed at establishing enhanced stability between the conventional forces of the two sides, at lower levels. The latter negotiations include all 35 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) participating states and seeks to build upon the achievements of the Stockholm Agreement, further enhancing transparency in military matters in Europe.

The Other Side of NATO: Non-Military Co-operation

Over the years, NATO has developed a series of programs to stimulate co-operation among its members on issues of common interest. All of them draw their inspiration from the "Canadian Article" on Non-Military Co-operation in NATO (Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty). The 1956 "Report of the Three Wise Men on non-military co-operation in NATO" concluded that NATO needed to demonstrate that it is more than a military alliance and to give further expression to the "Canadian Article." The "Wise Men" (one of whom was the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson) concluded that NATO should undertake activities "to strengthen allied cohesiveness by reinforcing a sense of common interest and shared values."

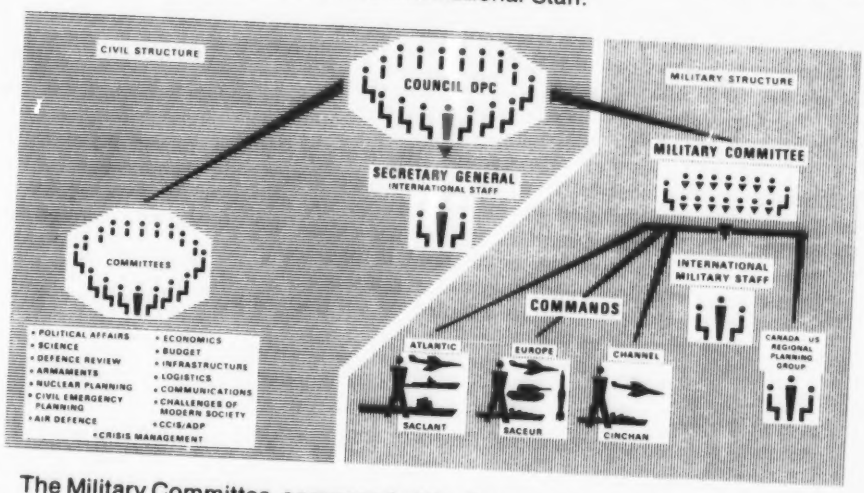
> *The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.*
>
> *— Article 2, The North Atlantic Treaty, April 1949.*

As a result, the NATO Science Committee was established in 1958 to promote non-military scientific co-operation within NATO and provide advice to the North Atlantic Council on questions of science and technology. The NATO Science Programme aims for the enhancement of the scientific and technical capabilities of the Alliance by fostering co-operation and information exchanges between scientists of member countries and by promoting actions to help close gaps in the scientific knowledge and research capabilities of member nations. Specifically the programme includes a fellowship programme, research grants, and the sponsoring of different symposia. More recently, the Science Committee's "Science for Stability" programme was initiated to help promote the development of the science and technology infrastructures of Greece, Portugal and Turkey.

As a further mechanism for non-military co-operation in NATO the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS) was established in 1969. The mandate of CCMS is to improve in every practical way, the exchange of views and experience within the Alliance on methods of creating a better environment for Allied societies. Specifically, CCMS is called upon to consider the problem of environment in its broadest terms (including socio-economic processes) with the objective of stimulating action by member governments. Under the auspices of CCMS, governments propose pilot studies on specific subjects which other governments

Civil and Military Structure

The North Atlantic Council, the highest authority in NATO, provides a forum for wide political consultation and co-ordination between the allies. Military policy is discussed in the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) composed of member countries participating in NATO's integrated defence structure. The Council and the DPC meet twice yearly in ministerial meetings when member countries are represented by Foreign and Defence Ministers. In permanent session the Council meets at least once a week at the level of ambassadors (Permanent Representatives). The Secretary General of NATO is Chairman of the Council and the DPC and also heads the International Staff. In support of their roles, the Council and the DPC have established a number of committees covering the whole range of NATO's activities which normally meet under the chairmanship of a member of the International Staff.



The Military Committee, composed of the Chiefs-of-Staff of the member countries taking part in the NATO integrated military structure, is the senior military authority in the Alliance. It provides advice to the Council or DPC on military matters and gives guidance to the Major NATO Commanders. Meeting at Chiefs-of-Staff level at least twice a year, the Committee in permanent session meets weekly at the level of national Military Representatives appointed by their Chiefs-of-Staff. The Chairperson of the Military Committee is elected by the Chiefs-of-Staff for a period of 2-3 years. Implementation of the policies and decisions of the Military Committee is ensured by the international Military Staff (IMS) which acts as executive agency. The NATO defence area is divided into three separate regional Commands — Allied Command Europe, Allied Command Atlantic and Allied Command Channel — and a Regional Planning Group for the North American area. Under the general guidance of the Military Committee the Major NATO Commanders are responsible for planning the defence of their areas and for conducting NATO's land, sea and air exercises.

may join, or not, in accordance with their own priorities. Given the growing concerns related to the environment, the CCMS may take on a higher profile in the coming years.

Why Canada is a Member of NATO

> *The national well-being of Canada and North America is inextricably linked to the strategic defence and political integrity of Western Europe.*
>
> *We believe in NATO because it is the best way to ensure Canada's security and indeed our sovereignty.*
>
> — *Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada, NATO Summit Meeting, March 1988.*

Canada is a member of NATO because we believe our democratic traditions and values are worth preserving and protecting. Collective defence is the most effective and efficient way of doing this. That is why successive Canadian governments have continued to place major importance on our membership in NATO and our continued contribution to collective defence and the shared political values of the Alliance. They have stated clearly that the cost of the Canadian contribution to NATO is well worth the price, particularly when compared to the alternatives which might well have brought less security at greater cost. Indeed, Canada participates fully in all important activities of the Alliance.

Membership in NATO assists Canada in achieving several of its most important foreign policy objectives:

- It provides the essential collective security framework for enhancing the security of Canada.
- Through the Alliance's efforts to foster dialogue with the Warsaw Pact, Canada assists in advancing arms control and disarmament, reducing regional tensions and thereby improving international peace and security.
- Canada's active pursuit of meaningful consultations within the Alliance, particularly on arms control and disarmament issues, serves not only the objective of enhancing national security and international peace, but also the objective of reinforcing sovereignty, by ensuring that Canadian views and policies are clearly understood by the Allies and taken into account in Alliance decision-making.

Canada has a particularly strong interest in further improving East/West relations. Membership in NATO allows Canada and its other NATO allies to consult closely on details of negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States, and thus the opportunity to influence these negotiations.

The Alliance is a vital link for Canada in promoting transatlantic co-operation in many fields including economic, social, scientific, and environmental. It also provides Canada with important levels of contact with its most significant trading partners. NATO countries account for up to 90 per cent of Canada's imports and exports.

Participating in the Alliance's common-funded programs, and in the Alliance's efforts to foster armaments co-operation, improves the access of Canadian firms to Alliance defence and defence-related markets and enhances their opportunities for co-operation and contacts with other Alliance firms, particularly those involved in high-technology areas.

> *In assessing the importance of NATO, it is worth noting Europe, which erupted into violence twice in the forty years before NATO was established, has known no war since that time. So the debate is not between warmongers and peacekeepers. The debate is about the best way to keep peace and expand freedom.*
>
> — *Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 31, 1988.*

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This publication is part of a series dealing with various aspects of Canadian foreign policy. Additional copies can be obtained from the Domestic Communications Division, Department of External Affairs, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2. Telephone (613) 996-3709.

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